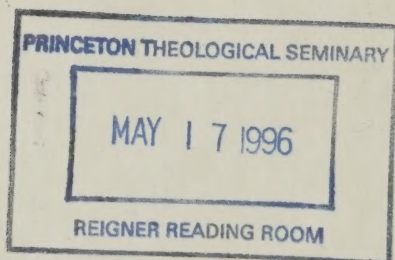


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Christmas Plays

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF THE HOLY GRAIL

By

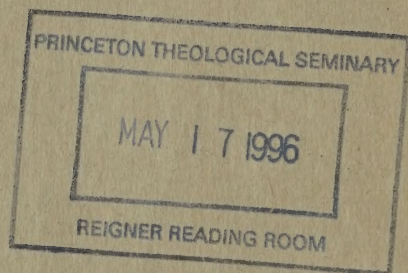
W. RUSSELL BOWIE

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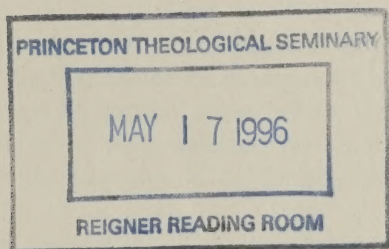
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The Christmas Pageant of the Holy Grail

W. RUSSELL BOWIE



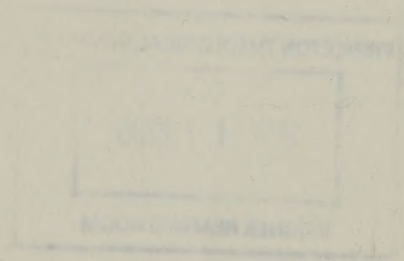
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Printed in the United States of America

INTRODUCTORY

THIS pageant was written to be given in a church, and was actually presented at the morning service on the Sunday before Christmas. Its whole purpose and mood are devotional, and the full effect of the pageant can be secured only in surroundings which are worshipful. Whenever reproduced, it should be given, if possible, not in a hall but in a church, and should be presented with as great beauty as circumstances will allow. The chancel would, of course, need to be of reasonable size and clear of the usual church furniture, such as choir benches, etc. The choir should sit in the body of the church, near the front, and it is they who sing the hymns which are introduced in the course of the pageant.

If the circumstances require that the pageant be given in a hall rather than in a church, the hall should be so arranged as to suggest as completely as possible that reverential mood which the church itself would convey. If local talent and resources make this practicable, scenery may be used for the background of the pageant. This, however, should be simple.

Yet the nature of the pageant is such that it can be adapted to very varied resources in the way of preparation. It will be more effective in a beautiful church, but it can be presented in a very simple place if done with a devotional spirit. It will be most beautiful if some skillful musician provides on the organ the musical interludes which are indicated, but it can also be presented with no music at all save the singing of simple hymns. The children who represent the different characters have no words to learn. The entire story is read by the minister, or some other person in his place, from the pulpit or other vantage point in the chancel of the church. The children should be carefully rehearsed to carry out the actions indicated in the story as read. All the essential movements and gestures are indicated in the story itself. The children enact, as the story is read, that which they are described as doing.

Those who wish to give the pageant with their own Sunday school, should first read the story and visualize it in their mind's eye. The text itself will indicate how the characters appear, and in large part their

attitude and gestures. Some dramatic insight on the leader's part can very easily supply all the guidance which the pageant itself does not indicate. It has been found in experience that three or four complete rehearsals are sufficient to have the pageant smoothly and reverently presented by children of from twelve to fourteen years of age.

It will help the congregation understand and follow the pageant more vividly if there is printed and distributed a very simple order of service and program of the pageant, indicating the scenes to be imagined and the characters in the order of their appearance.

For possible convenience of suggestion, indications are introduced into the text as to the location of the entrances and exits used in the church where the pageant was first given. The letter R represents a door leading from a choir room at the extreme forward right-hand side of the church as one faces the chancel. From this door the children would come along the front cross aisle, and up the steps at the front of the chancel. The letter B represents a door in the right-hand rear wall of the chancel itself. The letter M represents the middle aisle.

COSTUMES

THESE suggestions for costumes are based on the costumes which were used in the original production. Materials may be easily obtained by borrowing from members of the congregation. In this way the cost is reduced to a minimum, handsome materials and varied effects are obtained, and more people become interested in the production. Furs, capes, silk scarfs, dressing gowns of corduroy or velvet, draperies and embroideries as well as beads and jewels can be used with good effects.

JOSEPH. A black cassock tied with a girdle and a dark turban.

MARY. A flowing white dress with a blue cape and a blue or white veil.

THE SHEPHERDS wear short tunics to the knees, of any drab, rough material, bare feet, legs, and arms. A short cloak may fall from the shoulders and a piece of fur thrown over one shoulder and coming down on the breast. Each should carry a staff in his hand.

THE WISE MEN have long tunics of different colors, reaching to the feet which are sandaled, girdles of contrasting colors and capes suspended from, or falling over, the shoulders. Care should be taken to harmonize the colors and also to make each figure distinct, using different combinations of color with each one. They should wear crowns with flowing veils.

THE ANGELS wear white cheesecloth robes, wide sleeves lined with gold-colored cheesecloth. Wings of gold and golden haloes, girdles of pale-colored very thin silk, or a rainbow scarf of thin silk.

The DAMSELS, the PAGE, the SIX KNIGHTS and KING ARTHUR should follow as closely as possible the Abbey illustrations of The Holy Grail in the Boston Public Library, of which colored prints can easily be obtained.

In making costumes for the pageant the following suggestions may prove helpful:

Turbans can be made of white or colored cheesecloth or any piece of soft material which gives the color required.

Sandals are best made from the soles of bedroom slippers, but where these were not obtainable they have been made from pasteboard, which is not so desirable. They are laced with strips of leather or

colored tape, and again, if necessary, strips of cloth may be substituted.

Helmets can have the crowns of old derby hats for their foundations; the parts attached to make the visor, etc., can be of cardboard and attached to the crown by paper clips. If derby hats are not to be found, pasteboard can be used or tin helmets made. The helmets not of tin should be painted with aluminum paint and ornamented.

Girdles can be made of dyed cheesecloth or scarfs. For the Robbers, Shepherds, etc., a simple cord or rope is used.

The robes for the WISE MEN can be made from dressing gowns of rich colors belted at the waist with wide scarfs. The capes or cloaks can be draped from curtains, tablecloths, or may be simply pieces of material, the art being in combining the colors and arranging the drapery in graceful lines.

The furs for the SHEPHERDS can be stoles of fur, perhaps with a head, or a deer's skin.

Armor is effectively made by sewing together string dish cloths of very wide mesh and dipping them in aluminum paint.

Breastplates can be made of cardboard or buckram and painted with aluminum. They are held in place by elastic bands over the shoulders and under the arms.

Wings for the ANGELS can be made of wire and buckram and gilded; ingenuity may be used in shaping the wings in graceful lines.

Haloës are cut from cardboard in a wide ring and gilded. On either side is a small slit, and through these pass a band going over the forehead and holding the halo in place, but free from the top of the head. This band can be of elastic covered with tinsel.

The crowns for HEROD and the WISE MEN can be made of pasteboard and gilded, with jewels and tinsel trimmings.

The casket carried by one of the WISE MEN to hold the gold can be made of pasteboard, gilt, and jewels, but sometimes a very handsome box can be borrowed. A censer and a silver vase or a brass vase may be used for the other WISE MEN.

The Cup of The Holy Grail may be a silver bowl, within which is an electric flash-light. A slight frame above the brim supports the veil. This is of very thin linen. A piece of tissue paper over the bulb softens the light, and as the Chalice is held high over the head a soft glow shows under the veil.

PROPERTIES

IN addition to the costumes for the various characters, the following simple objects are needed as properties for the pageant.

SCENE I

A throne for the King at left front of chancel.

An altar or representation of one at the center and back of the chancel.

(This remains in place throughout all the scenes.)

An illuminated altar book or some other colorful book to represent this.

A gong to be struck outside, unless the organ has chimes which can be used.

A piece of soft white stuff to be used by the angels as a screen.

Small objects of one kind or another for the shepherds to carry in their hands as gifts.

Two rich-looking boxes or caskets for the Wise Men to carry.

A handsome goblet, if possible of silver.

SCENE II

A number of handsome chairs or seats, all but two of them alike.

Those two should be larger and handsomer.

A trumpet.

A sword for the King and a sword for Modred and, if possible, swords for the other knights.

SCENE III

The King's throne.

A small casket as of gold.

A plume.

A handsome robe or cape.

A Maltese cross of white cloth.

SCENE IV

The seats of the knights, as in Scene II.

A cluster of large keys.

Two or three lances.

A small flag or pennant on a pole.

A sword.

The same goblet as in Scene I.

SCENES

The four scenes take place in the Hall of the Castle of Camelot.

SCENE I

Characters in the order of their appearance

Christmas Eve

KING ARTHUR

TWO SHEPHERDS

TWO ANGELS

THREE WISE MEN

JOSEPH AND MARY

SCENE II

Twelve Days Later at Epiphany

LAUNCELOT

GARETH

A PAGE

TRISTRAM

KING ARTHUR

PERCIVAL

BEDIVERE

MODRED

SCENE III

Christmas Eve a Year Later

LAUNCELOT

A PAGE

GALAHAD

THREE DAMSELS

MODRED

ANOTHER DAMSEL

SCENE IV

Christmas Morning

A PAGE

PERCIVAL

KING ARTHUR

LAUNCELOT

BEDIVERE

GALAHAD

TRISTRAM

TWO ANGELS

GARETH

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF THE HOLY GRAIL

SCENE I

READER: Long ago in Britain lived King Arthur, and round him in his high castle of Camelot gathered the knights whom he had chosen. It is of Arthur and of his knights, and especially of Launcelot and Galahad, that you shall hear to-day. And you shall hear of Arthur's dream, and of his great desire. At Christmas time he dreamed, and in his dream he saw a vision of the Christ-child, and of all those who came to Bethlehem to bring him gifts; and then was born the king's desire to win for Christ the gift which only the perfect knight at last should bring. Watch, therefore, and consider, and understand.

(Enter, slowly and thoughtfully, KING ARTHUR.)

Into the hall of the castle at Camelot came King Arthur, in the long, late silence of a Christmas Eve. He moved slowly as one whose thoughts were far away. Somewhere in the castle a bell chimed the hour of midnight (*gong strikes twelve*), and dimly through far corridors came the sound of voices singing very softly to herald the Christmas day.

(Choir sings softly a verse or two of any Christmas hymn, while the reading continues.)

(Arthur stops before altar, and takes service book, opens, and very slowly, reading as he walks, approaches large chair, at congregation's left, and sits down.) From an altar of the chapel, which opened from the great hall, the king took the service book, with reverent hands. He turned the pages until he came to the story of Christmas, blazoned there in color and gold. He moved with slow steps across the hall, reading as he went; sat down, and followed the story to its end. Motionless he lingered there, pondering with quiet eyes. *(Pantomime follows story.)* Then very gradually he closed the book; he laid it down upon the floor beside him; his head dropped forward on his hand. He slept and dreamed.

(Organ begins—"Angels from the Realms of Glory.")

REGENT SQUARE.

8.7.8.7.8.7.

HENRY SMART, 1866.

1 An-gels, from the realms of glo-ry, Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye, who sang cre-a-tion's sto-ry, Now pro-claim Mes-si-ah's birth:
Come and wor-ship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the new-born King. A-men.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>2 Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by
night;
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light:
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn
King.</p> | <p>3 Sages, leave your contemplations;
Brighter visions beam afar:
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star:
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn
King.</p> |
|--|---|
- 4 Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear:
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

JAMES MONTGOMERY, 1816.

(Two angels appear from door B, carrying a screen of soft veiling stuff.)

In a vision he beheld two angels pass before him, and a veil hid what was behind them. (*Tableau as suggested by story.*) Then the

veil was lifted and he saw the maiden mother in the stable at Bethlehem, bending over the Christ-child at her breast, while Joseph kept watch at her side. (*Enter shepherds from R, follow action of story.*) With timid step and wondering gaze, two shepherds drew near, and knelt before the mother and the Child, laying rude gifts before them on the ground. (*Organ dies away.*) For a while they knelt in adoration, while the air was filled with heavenly singing. Then they rose, and very reverently went on their way. (*Exeunt shepherds at B.*)

Still on his throne the king sat motionless, while the vision unfolded before his dreaming eyes. Toward the presence of the mother and Child, three other figures were drawing near. From the distance they came, and the sound of their voices went before them. (*Quartet behind the door at R sings two verses of "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning."*) Very softly they sang together of a quest on which

WEBBE (*First Tune*).

II. IO. II. IO.

SAMUEL WEBBE, 1740-1816;

Adapted from EDWARD MILLER, 1735-1807.

1 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning, Dawn on our darkness, and

lend us thine aid; Star of the East, the ho - ri - zon a - dorn - ing,

Guide where our in - fant Re - deem - er is laid. A - men.

2 Cold on His cradle the dew-drops are shining,
 Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
 Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
 Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

- 3 Shall we not yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?
- 4 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.
- 5 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid:
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

REGINALD HEBER, 1811.

their feet were set. (MAGI *enter at R.*) They were Magi from the East, from the far lands where for centuries men had watched the stars and read in them the message of the thoughts of God. They wore the garments and they walked with the mien of kings. (MAGI *approach the CHILD and stand still in awe.*) Yet they, too, like the humble shepherds, paused in awe before the mother and the Child. One by one they knelt and offered the gifts which they were bearing in their hands.

(MELCHIOR *comes forward, kneels, and offers his gift.*)

"O little Child," said Melchior the leader of the Magi, "I bring thee gold as symbol of thy kingship. Yet thou art King in nobler way than any crown of gold can show." (MELCHIOR *rises, and goes left.*)

(GASPAR *comes forward, kneels and offers his gift.*)

Said Gaspar, the second of the Magi, as he knelt, "I bring thee myrrh and frankincense, O thou who by thy sorrows shall be King of all the bruised hearts of men." (*Arises and goes left.*)

(BALTHASAR *holds cup high, advances, and kneels. An angel takes it from him, as both come forward.*)

Balthasar, the last of the Magi, held in his hands a jeweled cup. As he knelt to offer it, one of the angels stooped and took it from his hands. She held it high. (*Organ begins "Parsifal" music.*)

(*Angel holds the cup high. MELCHIOR and GASPAR again kneel where they are.*)

"Behold!" the angels said to one another, "from this cup the lips of the Christ-child, grown to be a man, shall drink. From this cup he shall share the wine with his disciples in an upper room that waits beneath the shadow of a cross. And this cup, filled with the wine of his last sacrifice, shall be the Holy Grail. Through all the earth men shall seek for it, and follow on to find it. But none shall ever see it save those who are fit to stand in the Presence of Christ."

(*Exeunt MAGI at B.*)

Slowly the Magi rose and went on their way.

(*Follow action of story.*)

On his throne King Arthur stirred. He drew one hand across his brow. It was as though the dream were passing from him, and he must seize it before it went away.

(*Slowly comes toward congregation, one hand upon his breast, the other lifted; his eyes still gazing away.*)

He rose, and with slow steps went forward.

"I have seen the shepherd and the Magi bring their gifts into the presence of the Christ," he said. "Out of my kingdom I would bring a gift that will find favor in his eyes. How may it come to pass that even in our later years we still at Christmas time may stand in the presence of the Christ?"

(*Angels draw curtain before the Holy Family tableau. One angel takes a step toward ARTHUR.*)

Then very gently the angels looked at him, but between him and the Holy Ones they drew the veil. Mary and Joseph and the Child Jesus vanished. (*Sheltered by the veil, they go out at B.*) Then one of the angels spoke.

(*Arthur turns and bows his head, his hands crossed on his breast.*)

"In your dream you have beheld what mortal eyes can seldom see. You have asked that from your kingdom there may come a gift which shall make him who brings it worthy to stand in the presence of Christ. Go seek then for the noblest gift which life can bring. When you have found the perfect gift, then shall you see again the Holy Grail. Till then it vanishes, and the Christmas music sounds no more."

(*Follow action of story.*)

Slowly the angels passed from sight. (*They go out at B.*)

In the midst of the hall King Arthur stood with eyes from which his dreaming lifted like a mist. He raised his head, and a shiver of waking passed through his frame. He flung out his arms and cried aloud: (*Hold tableau of outflung arms, facing congregation, throughout speech.*)

"What I this night have seen, as in a vision, help me, O Lord, with unveiled eyes to see again. Teach me to find the perfect gift for Christ. And when that gift is found, let the token be that we shall see in our midst again the cup of the Holy Grail."

For a moment he knelt before the altar. (*Follow action of story.*) Then presently he rose and went his way.

(In interval between Scenes I and II, Choir sings hymn, "We Three Kings of Orient Are.")

THREE KINGS OF ORIENT.
GASPARD.

P.M. JOHN HENRY HOPKINS, JUN., 1857.

1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, Bear - ing gifts we traverse a -
5 Glo - rious now be - hold Him a - rise, King, and God, and Sac - ri -

MELCHIOR.

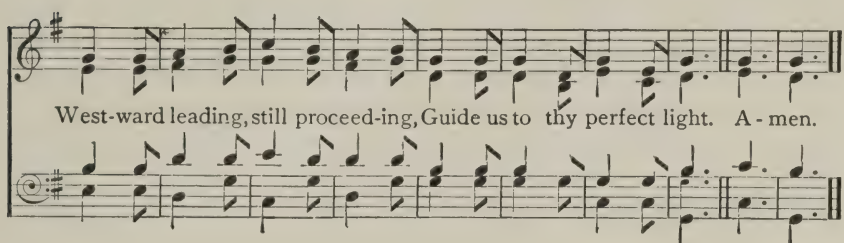
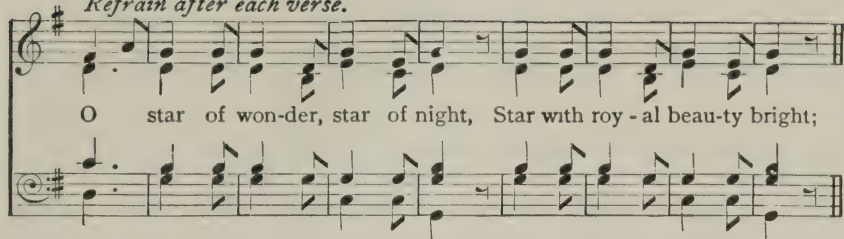
1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, Bear - ing gifts we traverse a -
5 Glo - rious now be - hold Him a - rise, King, and God, and Sac - ri -

BALTHAZAR.

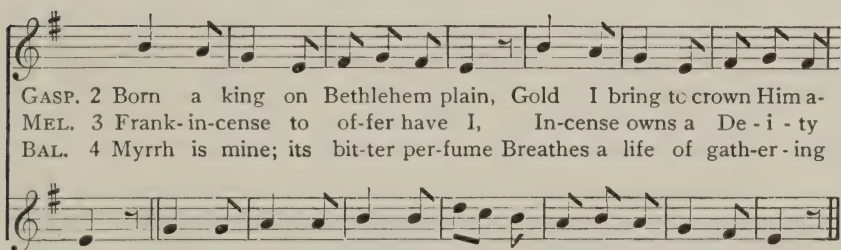
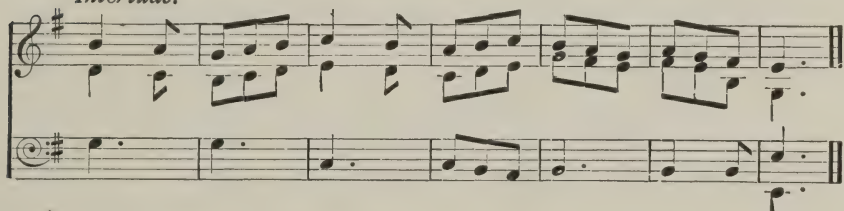
far, Field and foun - tain, Moor and moun - tain, Following yon - der star.
fice; Heav'n sings Al - le - lu - ia: Al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

far, Field and foun - tain, Moor and moun - tain, Following yon - der star.
fice; Heav'n sings Al - le - lu - ia: Al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

Refrain after each verse.



Interlude.



GASP. 2 Born a king on Bethlehem plain, Gold I bring to crown Him a-
MEL. 3 Frank-in-cense to of-fer have I, In-cense owns a De-i-ty
BAL. 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit-ter per-fume Breathes a life of gath-er-ing

gain, King for ev-er, Ceas-ing nev-er O-ver us all to reign.
nigh: Prayer and prais-ing All men rais-ing, Worship Him, God on high.
gloom; Sorrow-ing, sigh-ing, Bleeding, dy-ing, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

JOHN HENRY HOPKINS, JUN., 1857.

*Verses 2, 3, and 4 should be sung as solos, the accompaniment and refrain being unchanged.
Men's voices are preferable for the parts of the three kings.*

SCENE II

Seats are arranged in shallow semi-circle, facing the congregation.

READER: In the hall at Camelot, the seats of Arthur's knights were ranged. Among them was the throne of the king himself, but beside it there was a still nobler seat. No knight sat there. It was called the Siege Perilous, and only the perfect knight might dare to claim it for his own. Many a brave and goodly knight belonged to Arthur's court, but never a one who dared to say his knighthood had no fault. For long, long time the Siege Perilous had stood unoccupied, and many began to think that it should stand thus till Camelot itself should be no more. The perfect knight did not exist, they said. The Siege Perilous was only the symbol of an empty hope. (*LAUNCELOT and page enter at B.*)

Into the hall came Launcelot and a page. The greatest of the knights of Arthur led the boy gently by the hand. (*Rests arm about page's shoulders.*)

"Little lad," he said, "you are ever about the king. Why is his heart so sad?" (*Follow action of story.*)

The boy pointed to the Siege Perilous.

"I think he grieves," he said, "that still that seat is vacant." (*Launcelot, too, looks at seat.*)

"Yea, that is an old regret," said Launcelot, "but is that all?"

(*The page, if desired, may pantomime each of the characters.*)

"Not all," the boy replied, "yet all is linked with that. The king is troubled at a dream he had on Christmas Eve. He seemed to see the Christ-child, and the shepherds, and the Wise Men bringing gifts. He saw an angel also who held the Holy Grail. And he heard in his dream that he should never see the Holy Grail again, nor hear the heavenly Christmas music, till out of his kingdom there should come a gift that should be fit for Christ. He hoped that one of his knights might somehow bring it, and that such a knight might fill the empty seat."

"It may be as you say," said Launcelot (*ARTHUR enters at B*), but look where Arthur comes!" (*Exit page at B.*)

The king appeared in the doorway, and advanced into the hall, while the boy went out. (*Follow action of story.*) He stretched out his hands toward Launcelot, and Launcelot knelt and kissed his hands.

"Kneel not," said Arthur. (*Gestures to LAUNCELOT to stand.*) "Rise, for I would counsel with thee. A great desire stirs me, till it be fulfilled. Ere another Christmas, we must learn the secret that shall bring again the Holy Grail. Out of the kingdom we must find a gift for Christ so great that we shall win His presence here."

"Then bid us go," said Launcelot (*LAUNCELOT stands, and faces king earnestly*), "on that quest. Through all the borders of the kingdom send the knights of Camelot. Perchance some one of us may win the gift that can bring back the Grail."

"So let it be," said Arthur. "Go, call the page." (*ARTHUR gestures toward door, and slowly walks over to his chair. Follow action of story.*)

Launcelot went to the door and came back in a moment with the boy.

"Summon the knights to come to me," said Arthur.

The lad went out and came back presently with a trumpet. (*Page returns. Remains standing right. Follow action of story.*)

Arthur took his seat upon his throne, and bade Launcelot seat himself upon his left. On his right was the Siege Perilous.

"Sir Bedivere!" the page proclaimed (*organ sounds trumpet notes*), and set the trumpet to his lips and blew to herald him. (*Enter*

Trumpet Theme



each of the knights as called. All bow before the king as they enter.)

Sir Bedivere made his obeisance to the king and took the seat by Launcelot.

Then, one by one, came others, while the trumpet heralded their approach.

"Sir Gareth!"

"Sir Tristram!"

"Sir Percival!"

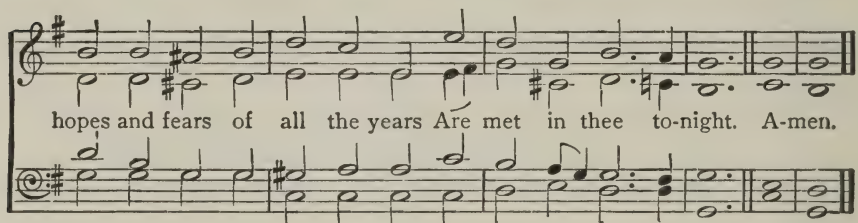
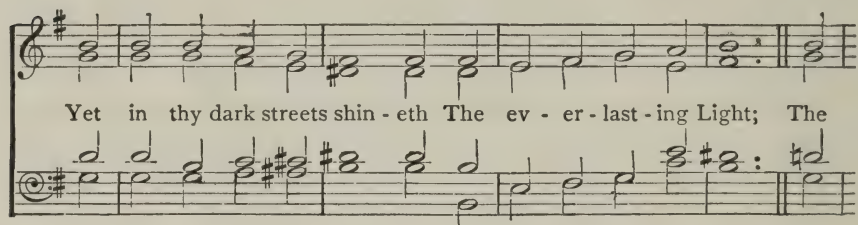
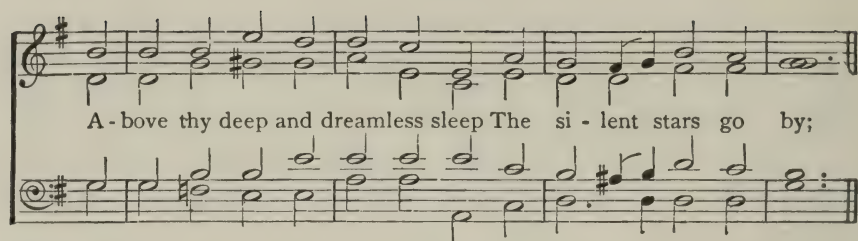
"Sir Modred!"

(*Organ begins music of "O Little Town of Bethlehem."*)

ST. LOUIS.

7.6.8.6.D.

LEWIS H. REDNER, 1868.



- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>2 For Christ is born of Mary;
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.</p> | <p>No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him,
The dear Christ enters in. [still</p> |
| <p>3 How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.</p> | <p>4 O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel! Amen.</p> |

PHILLIPS BROOKS, 1868.

When they were assembled, Arthur spoke. (*All are settled, and listen carefully to the king.*) "Last Christmas Eve," he said, "I saw a vision. I beheld the Christ-child and those who came to bring him gifts. I saw an angel with the Holy Grail. But the Holy Grail shall come no more to Camelot till some great gift of glory shall be brought to Christ. To-day I send you forth on quest to try what you may win." (*Organ ceases.* *All stand but Modred, who remains gloomily on his seat.*)

Then up rose all but Modred.

"We shall go," they said. "Give us again thine accolade ere we depart." (*One by one they kneel before the king, who touches each with his sword.*)

One by one they knelt before the king—Sir Bedivere, Sir Percival, Sir Gareth and Sir Tristram—and he touched them with his sword; one by one they went with strong, swift stride away. (*Exit each as soon as the king has touched him. Only LAUNCELOT and MODRED remain.*)

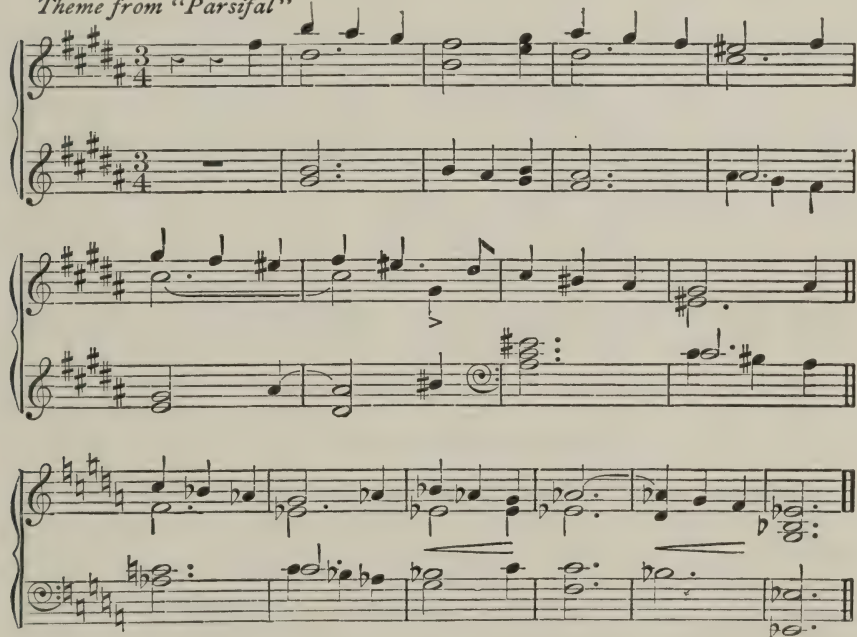
Only Launcelot and Modred were left with Arthur. (*Organ begins ominous music. MODRED turns to king.*)

Then slowly Modred spoke.

"I beg you send me forth on no such quest. I cannot chase the fancies of a dream" (*slowly rises and leaves the room*), and sullenly he passed from out the hall. (*Launcelot watches Modred angrily.*) (*Organ changes to "Parsifal" theme.*)

But Launcelot rose, with high, stern face. (*He takes a step after MODRED, but stops and faces king eagerly.*)

Theme from "Parsifal"



"We shall not fail," he said. "When Christmas Eve has come again, we shall return to bring thee, by God's grace, thy heart's desire."

He too knelt down before the king, and rose and went away. (*Follow action of story.*)

For a moment Arthur sat still upon his throne. Then he went and stood, with lifted face, before the altar, musing within himself.

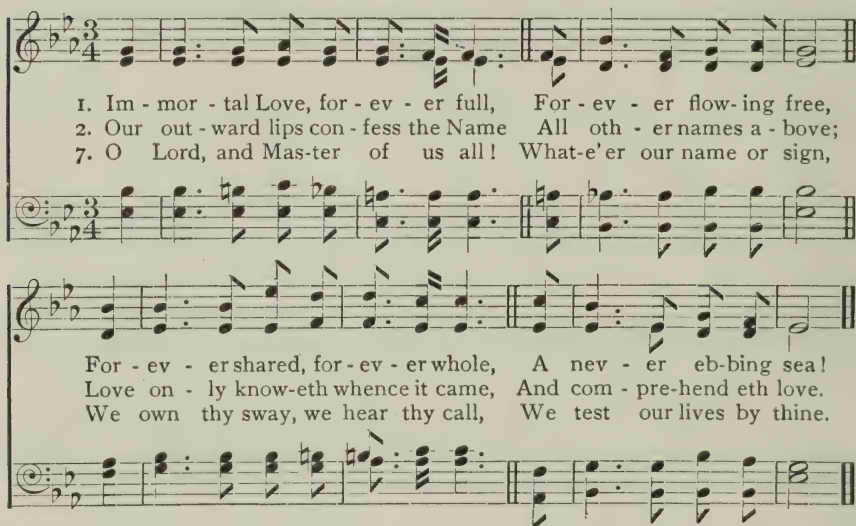
(*Organ changes to music of "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning."*)

"They go," he said, "as the Magi went of old, upon a distant quest. They follow their gleam as the Magi followed their star. God grant that they, too, shall find the presence of Christ at the end of the way."
(*ARTHUR goes out.*)

(*In interval between Scenes II and III, Choir sings verses 1, 2, and 7 of hymn, Immortal Love.*)

SERENITY. C. M.

WILLIAM V. WALLACE



1. Im - mor - tal Love, for - ev - er full, For - ev - er flow - ing free,
2. Our out - ward lips con - fess the Name All oth - er names a - bove;
7. O Lord, and Mas - ter of us all! What - e' er our name or sign,

For - ev - er shared, for - ev - er whole, A nev - er eb - bing sea!
Love on - ly know - eth whence it came, And com - pre - hend eth love.
We own thy sway, we hear thy call, We test our lives by thine.

SCENE III

The Throne placed as in Scene I

READER: The months went by, and through all the realm the knights of Arthur, on wide ways of adventuring, sought to win for the king that which might be the gift of his heart's desire. On far and perilous ways they rode. Through many a struggle with the hosts of evil they carved their path. And now as the time drew on toward another Christmas, they turned their faces back to Camelot. (*LAUNCELOT enters at B.*)

Into the great hall of the castle came Launcelot, the knightliest of them all. In his steps was weariness, but from his eyes there shone the light of one who carried in his heart the secret of a mighty hope.

(*Enter GALAHAD.*) After him there came another figure that had not been seen in Camelot before. Younger than Launcelot was this new knight. He wore no armor, and his head was bare. Round his slender, yet stalwart form a scarlet cloak was girded. (*Follow action of story.*) He followed Launcelot into the hall, and stood there silently before the mightier knight.

"Here" (*with sweeping gesture LAUNCELOT encircles room, as GALAHAD follows it*), said Launcelot, "is the hall of Arthur. Here in this hall the knights of the king are wont to gather at the Table Round. (*Points at altar.*) Yonder at the altar, one by one, they have sworn their fealty to the king, and kept the vigil of their prayer to God for grace and courage, as becomes a knight. (*Places both hands on GALAHAD's shoulders.*) And you, who shall be known henceforth as Galahad, I bring you here that you may keep your vigil. (*Organ begins ominous music.*) The times are evil, and we come in needful hour. (*LAUNCELOT walks restlessly back and forth, stopping occasionally before GALAHAD to emphasize what he is saying.*) Since Christmas Day, a twelvemonth since, when I, and Percival, and Bedivere, and others who have loved the king, went forth on quest, bitterness and malice have lifted their heads within the palace. Modred, the false knight, has sought to break the spirit of the fellowship. He laughs at what he calls the dream of Arthur. It is even said that he would see revolt on foot if he but dared. Still he is here within the palace, like a serpent, venomous and secret. Always he has hated me. The very thought of Launcelot is madness to his brain. When he shall hear that I have brought you, he will do you evil if he may. Beware of Modred. Arm yourself against him; but arm you first with panoply of God. (*Brings GALAHAD to altar.*) To-night I leave you here before the altar, to keep the maiden vigil of a knight." (*Organ changes to a sweeter theme.*)

Then Launcelot went away, and Galahad was left alone. (*Follow action of story.*)

He knelt before the altar, and stretched forth his hands to pray. He folded them upon his breast, and bowed his head in silent adoration. (*Organ reverts to ominous music.*)

(*MODRED enters from R. Follow action of story.*)

Then very slowly from the far end of the hall, with steps that kept a stealthy quiet on the floor, came a knight with black cloak wrapped about his face. He stopped and stared at Galahad, kneeling, all unconscious of his presence. (*MODRED goes out swiftly.*) Then, as noiselessly as he had come, but swiftly, he vanished.

(Enter R MODRED with page. Follow action of story.)

Presently he came again, leading a page. He gripped the boy evilly by the hand. He pointed to Galahad and whispered a question to the page.

"Who is this newcomer to the Court of Arthur?" he demanded. (*The boy's wrist is still held in MODRED's grasp.*)

Frightened, the boy made answer to him. "That is Galahad, whom Launcelot has brought. For Launcelot says that this shall be the perfect knight who comes to bring the king the gift of his heart's desire."

Through the form of Modred a sudden shiver of anger ran. (*Gestures hastily for page to go.*)

"Begone!" he whispered to the boy. "Nor ever say thou sawest me here, or else thy life shall answer for it." (*Exit page at R.*)

Still before the altar, rapt in his devotion (*follow action of story*), Galahad knelt, unconscious still of what went on behind him.

Modred drew his sword.

"Here shall I end," he said, "the hopes of Launcelot." (*Follow action of story.*)

He drew closer to Galahad, the sword shortened in his hand.

Slowly the shoulders of Galahad straightened. He had not heard Modred, nor knew that he was near. His lips were moving in the intensity of prayer. He stretched out his arms, and, as he did so, they made the sign of the cross.

Modred saw it, and a dark fear fell upon him. (*Organ music ends in a sort of shiver of discord.*)

"It is the sign of God!" he said. "I dare not strike him." (*MODRED draws backward; then slowly goes to exit, his eyes on Galahad as he speaks.*) He recoiled a step, and his eyes roved here and there. Then a new thought seemed to strike him. His face revealed an evil joy.

"It is not needful that I strike him: I shall destroy him in a subtler way. I will tempt him to his fall." (*Follow action of story.*)

He went out, and Galahad bowed again in the silence of the shrine. (*Enter from R MODRED and three damsels.*)

After a time, came Modred again, and three damsels with him. They were richly clothed, and very fair. In the far corner of the hall, in shadow, where Galahad could not see, Modred waited. (*Follow action of story.*) The three damsels went forward softly toward the kneeling figure. They stood beside him till he knew that they were there.

Reluctantly he rose and faced them. (*One approaches Galahad.*)

"Sir Knight," said one of them, "on Christmas Day you come with Launcelot to appear before the king. It is not well that one should appear before him empty-handed. If you would be great in Camelot, you must come with marks of greatness which the eyes of all can see. Behold, I give you wealth."

She held out to him a golden casket, but Galahad stood still. (*The second comes nearer GALAHAD.*)

"And I bring you," said the second damsel, "this plume to glorify your helmet. It is the plume of fame." (*The third comes nearer to GALAHAD.*)

"And I," said the third, "would clothe you with this jeweled robe of pride." (*Surround him, holding out their gifts.*)

They came nearer with their rich gifts in their hands. But Galahad drew back, and looked at them. (*GALAHAD shakes his head.*) Slowly he shook his head.

"These gifts," he said, "are not for me. Not thus appareled must I come into the presence of the king." (*Follow action of story.*)

The damsels stood irresolute. Then they withdrew to where Modred, scowling, met them, and all together they passed from the hall.

(*Organ begins gentle music. Galahad stands facing altar. Enter fourth maiden. As she speaks, GALAHAD turns about and faces her.*)

But Galahad was not left alone. For ere the damsels had retreated, another figure had come into the hall. She had watched them wonderingly as they retreated, and had seen the evil face of Modred meet them. Silently she came forward and stood near Galahad. (*"Par-sifal" Music.*)

"Sir Knight," she said, "with wisdom have you refused the gifts but now held out to you. Not wealth, nor fame, nor pride will make you ready to satisfy the heart's desire of the king. One thing alone is needful, and that none other than yourself can give. Therefore, I bring you not a gift, but only the token of what you yourself must offer. Upon your robe I put the cross of consecration. Wear it as a symbol of the knightliness you bring." (*Follow action of story.*)

In her hand she held a cross, cut from white cloth of samite. She fastened it upon the red robe of Galahad.

He stood before her, looking far away. (*Follow action of story.*)

Quietly she went away while Galahad still was motionless. Then he, too, passed through the doorway of the hall. (*Exit at B.*)

(Choir sings hymn, "Silent Night, Holy Night," while preparation is being made for Scene IV.)

HOLY NIGHT.

P.M.

FRANZ GRÜBER, 1818;
Harmonized by **CARL REINECKE.**

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, All is calm, all is bright

Round yon Vir - gin Mother and Child. Ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and mild,

Sleep in heav - en - ly peace, Sleep in heav - en - ly peace. A - men.

2 Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Saviour, is born!
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

3 Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth. Amen.

JOSEPH MOHR, 1818.

SCENE IV

Seats arranged as in Scene II

READER: The night of Christmas Eve drew on toward the morning of another Christmas. (*Enter page at B. Follow action of story.*) The day was breaking, as into the hall at Camelot came the little page. He sat down at the foot of Arthur's throne. His head drooped, and presently he fell asleep. (*ARTHUR enters at B. Follow action of story.*)

From the door came Arthur. He saw the boy and smiled. Quietly he seated himself upon the throne, and looked down upon the sleeping figure. He laid his hand tenderly upon the boy's hair. (*Holds tableau throughout speech.*)

"To-day, little lad," he said in a low voice that did not wake the child, "to-day we may behold a marvelous thing. Perhaps the gift shall be brought that shall call back the Holy Grail. (*Looks upward.*) If it comes, we shall hear again the heavenly music. If there is only silence, we shall know that the gift has not been found. To-day, this Christmas morn, my knights come back. Look, how through the eastern windows comes the sun. (*Gently shakes the boy.*) Wake, little lad!" (*Choir sings one verse of "O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking."*)

CORONÆ (*First Tune*).

8.7.8.7.4.7.

WILLIAM H. MONK, 1871.

O'er the dis - tant mount-ains break - ing Comes the red - dening dawn of day;

The first system of the musical score is for the first two lines of the song. It features a treble and bass staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/2 time. The melody is written in a simple, hymn-like style with block notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Rise, my soul, from sleep a - wake - ning, Rise and sing, and watch, and pray;

The second system of the musical score continues the melody for the next two lines of the song. It maintains the same key and time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes.

'Tis thy Sav - iour, On his bright re - turn - ing way.

The third system of the musical score concludes the song. It features a final cadence. The lyrics are written below the notes.

The boy, startled from his sleep, looked up, frightened, at the king. (*Follow action of story.*)

"Be not afraid," said Arthur. (*Gestures to boy to go.*) "Go, look from the tower and see whether the knights ride home." (*Exit page for a moment at B and returns.*)

The boy went out, and in a little while he came again.

"They come," he said. "Even now the first of them has passed the gate." (*Arthur looks toward door.*)

Eagerly King Arthur waited. (*BEDIVERE enters at B.*)

Through the doorway presently came Sir Bedivere. He bore in his hand a cluster of great keys. (*Bows before king. Then stands and holds forth the keys.*)

"God make thee glad this day, King Arthur!" he exclaimed. "For I have brought these keys of far-off castles I have won for thee, to do with as thou wilt."

"Welcome, Sir Bedivere," said Arthur. "And well I know the prowess thou hast shown. Lay down thy gift before the altar." (*BEDIVERE kneels before the altar and lays down his gift, then comes slowly to his seat.*)

Sir Bedivere laid down the keys; and there was silence.

He took his seat with disappointed face. (*Enter SIR TRISTRAM. Same action as before.*)

In came Sir Tristram. In his hand he carried a cluster of lances.

"These, O King," he said, "are the weapons of thine enemies whom I have overthrown."

And the king answered, "Valiant is thy spirit, Tristram. Lay down thy gift before the shrine of God." (*Follow action of story.*)

Tristram laid down the lances. But again the hall was silent, nor came there any heavenly sign.

Tristram took his seat. (*Enter SIR GARETH.*)

Next came Sir Gareth. He carried in his hand a flag. (*Same action as before.*)

"This flag," he said, "is symbol of kingship over spacious realms. There, by my conquest, thou mayest reign."

"Thy valor, too, is noble," Arthur said. "Lay down the banner in the sight of God." (*Follow action of story.*)

Gareth placed it by the lances and the keys. But no sound broke the silence of the hall, nor came there any shining of the Grail.

Gareth took his seat. (*Enter PERCIVAL.*)

Next after him came Percival. He brought a gleaming sword. (*Same action as before.*)

"My Lord, the king," he said, "I took this sword from a far island in enchanted seas. Who carries it shall triumph everywhere. Take this, and all the earth is thine—yea, thine to give to God." (*Follow action of story.*)

Arthur's eyes brightened. He rose from his throne. "Lay it before the altar," he said. "Let us see whether the Grail will come."

Percival laid down the sword. Then waited they all, and watched, and listened, but there came no sight nor sound.

Arthur sat down wearily upon his throne. "Only Launcelot is left," he said. (*Enter LAUNCELOT.*)

Then last came Launcelot.

"O best beloved of all the knights of Camelot," said Arthur, "What hast thou brought?" (*Follow action of story.*)

"I come," said Launcelot, "with empty hands. For no gifts we ourselves have wrought or won can gain for thee the Holy Grail. The dust of earthiness, the scars of sin, are on us all. One gift alone can bring the Holy Grail. It is the gift of a new manhood in our fellowship. It is the presence of a nobler knighthood, white, unstained and true." (*Follow action of story.*)

Back to the door he went, and came again, leading Galahad. (*Organ begins "Parsifal" music.*)

"Lo, here," he said, "is the virgin valor of the pure in heart. Here is the gift of the soul of man made fair for Christ."

Through the great spaces of the hall, there woke the sound of music. Sweet and faint and far away it seemed at first, and then it rose and surged into tumultuous splendor, like an ocean, throbbing upon an echoing shore. (*Entering from B two angels holding high the Holy Grail. Follow action of story.*) Then suddenly the hall was bright with an unearthly radiance, for into the presence of Arthur two angels came, and in their hands they bore the Holy Grail.

From their seats the knights leaped to their feet, and stood still and awestruck. Galahad fell upon his knees.

But the angels went and stood one on either side of the Siege Perilous, and over it they held the Grail. (*Follow action of story.*)

Launcelot went forward slowly and touched Galahad upon the shoulder. He bade him rise. Then, very reverently, he led him toward the Siege Perilous, and seated him there. (*Hold tableau.*)

The angels spoke, one to another.

"From the Siege Perilous," they said, "the life that brings its gift to God must go on ways of mighty service. Out on the road of human need it must adventure, offering there to the least of these, His brethren, the beauty of the gift it brings to Christ." (*Follow action of story.*)

On either side of the Siege Perilous they remained for a moment, lifting up the Holy Grail. Then, with the Grail held high between them (*exeunt down center aisle of church according to reading*), they passed from Camelot. From the Siege Perilous Galahad rose and followed them, and, after him, at a little distance, went Launcelot and the other knights of Arthur. The king himself stood motionless before his throne; and as he listened, there floated back the voice of Galahad as he sang—

Words adapted from
TENNYSON'S "Sir Galahad."

Music by
F. FLAXINGTON HARKER

Maestoso

My good blade carves the casques of men, My
So pass I forth through hov-'ring wings By

R. H.

tough lance thrust - eth sure, My strength is as the strength of
bridge and ford, by hill and vale All armed I ride what-e'er be-

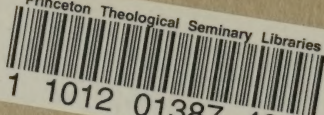
ten Be - cause my heart is pure.
tide I fol - low still the Ho - ly Grail.

Last verse slow

(After the angels, GALAHAD, LAUNCELOT, and the other knights have passed down the middle aisle, when the song of GALAHAD—sung outside by a voice from the choir—has ended, ARTHUR turns and with the page goes out through the chancel door. Then the choir and all the congregation rise and sing the hymn "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning.")

CHRISTMAS - Pageants and Plays

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1 1012 01387 4062

PN 3206 .B6 1927

Bowie, Walter Russell, 1882-1969.

The Christmas pageant of the
Holy Grail

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